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STATE FOR EEB/CBA (DWINSTEAD), NEA/ARP  
COMMERCE FOR ITA THOFFMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [BEXP](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN FY08 BFIF REQUEST

REF: 07 STATE 159597

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. Continued Business Facilitation Incentive Fund (BFIF) assistance will be essential in helping the Embassy promote the soon-to-be-implemented U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Post requests \$6,807 in BFIF program funds for outreach to the local community on the benefits of the FTA, strengthening our relationship with our Commercial Service (CS) partnership posts in the UAE, and supporting the programming efforts of the Muscat American Business Council (MABC). End Summary.

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PROMOTING THE FTA  
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¶2. As we approach implementation of the FTA, the Embassy has received numerous inquiries from the business community regarding the contents of the Agreement. For this reason, the Embassy requested that consultant Booz Allen Hamilton, under contract to the USG through the Middle East Partnership Initiative to develop a competitiveness study of the Omani economy, build into the finished product an overview of the benefits expected from the FTA, both from a broad-sweeping perspective and from its analysis of the following sectors: information, communications, and technology; transportation; and energy. The analysis has been completed and translated by Booz Allen Hamilton into Arabic. In order to make this study more widely available, the Embassy requests BFIF monies to print the publication for distribution to key contacts in the business community. The estimated cost to produce 300, 40-page color booklets is \$4500. We are ready to proceed with its publication, so consideration of this proposal at the earliest would be greatly appreciated.

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LEARNING THE ROPE OF A TRADE SHOW  
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¶3. The Embassy depends on its partnership with its CS sister posts in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in efforts to improve its commercial service offerings. As the FTA nears implementation, the Embassy would like to take advantage of this unique opportunity to promote U.S. exports by sending our Commercial Assistant FSN to our CS partnership post in Dubai. The purpose of her visit would be to learn how to work a trade show for U.S. products, how to manage a booth at trade expositions, how to better utilize the e-menu programs, and how to better attract Omani participation in international buyer programs, which has been identified as a top commercial service goal for 2008. The estimated cost of

this 3-day, 2-night proposal is \$1468.50 (\$350 airfare, \$724 lodging, \$357.50 per diem, \$37 taxi expenses). CS Abu Dhabi has identified an opportunity for our Commercial Assistant to participate in the Arab Health trade show on January 27-30, making consideration of this proposal a priority.

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PROVIDING GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESS COUNCIL  
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¶4. The Muscat American Business Council (MABC) plays an important role in promoting stronger ties between the U.S. and Omani business communities. Sponsored by the Embassy, the organization is now in its fourth year of operation. The MABC is now recognized as an affiliate member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Chamber's Vice President for the Middle East and Africa recently visited with MABC officials to discuss the chapter's near-term plans. With the implementation of the FTA, the MABC has the opportunity to play a key role in fostering FTA-related programs for its membership, especially with regard to tariff-free treatment of goods, understanding of rules of origin requirements, and regulatory updates, including the sweeping changes to Oman's labor code.

¶5. The MABC faces challenges in serving as an independent, institutional voice for the American business community in Oman. The executive director, a former Fulbright scholar in Oman, has now taken on a full-time position with an Omani company. To assist the new executive director in crafting the MABC's message, the Embassy requests BFIF assistance to bring the executive director of the American Business Council of Dubai and the Northern Emirates (ABCD) to Muscat for a one-day mentoring session. Aside from providing an overview on the operation of a business council, the ABCD executive director would be able to provide best practices on how to better address membership expectations through enhanced program offerings and how to manage an annual meeting, which the MABC has not hosted in recent years. The estimated cost of this 2-day proposal is \$838 (\$350 airfare, \$172 lodging, \$274 per diem, \$42 taxi expenses). Post would wait until a suitable candidate has been identified and brought on-board before committing funds to this proposal.

¶6. Embassy appreciates the opportunity to use BFIF monies to advance USG commercial goals in Oman. The Embassy's point of contact for the BFIF program is Economic/Commercial Officer Brian Grimm, phone (968) 2464-3623, GSM (mobile) (968) 9945-9887, email: GrimmBM@state.gov.  
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